

*English Section*



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## DAYS COMMEMORATING HISTORICAL EVENTS (16<sup>th</sup> October to 15<sup>th</sup> November)

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| 16 Oct. | Baba Banda Singh Bahadur born in Rajouri (Kashmir). (16-10-1670)   |
| 17 Oct. | <p>(a) The Sikhs defeated Ahmed Shah Durrani at Amritsar. (17-10-1762)</p> <p>(b) All Parties joined procession at Chandigarh for the return of Chandigarh to Punjab. (17-10-1969)</p>   |
| 19 Oct. | The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee decided to take over the keys of the treasury of Sri Darbar Sahib from Sardar Sunder Singh Ramgarhia. (19-10-1921)   |
| 20 Oct. | <p>(a) Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia passed away. (20-10-1783)</p> <p>(b) Chief Khalsa Diwan formed a religious committee to finalise <i>Sikh Rahit Maryada</i>. (20-10-1910)</p> <p>(c) Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh, a member of the Caretaker Jatha of <i>Akal Takht Sahib</i> called <i>Sarbat Khalsa</i> for the formation of the S.G.P.C. (20-10-1920)</p> |
| 21 Oct. | Poet/Historian Bhai Santokh Singh died. (21-10-1844)   |
| 22 Oct. | <p>(a) Sarbat Khalsa gathering at <i>Akal Takht Sahib</i> passed a Gurmata to punish Akil Das (Harbhagat Niranjania). (22-10-1761)</p> <p>(b) <i>Anand Marriage Act</i> (Act No. VII of 11.1909) became law. (22-10-1909)</p>  |
| 24 Oct. | Giani Kartar Singh resigned from the Punjab Cabinet to contest S.G.P.C. election. He formed <i>Sadh Sangat Board</i> . The main leaders were Giani Kartar Singh, Gopal Singh Khalsa, Gen. Mohan Singh, Amar Singh Dosanjh, Basant Singh Moga etc. (24-10-1959)   |
| 25 Oct. | <p>(a) Raja Salahi Chand of Basali died. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib visited Basali to join his last prayer. (25-10-1702)</p> <p>(b) Martyrdom day of Bhai Dhanna Singh, a Babar Akali revolutionary, in an encounter with the Police. (25-10-1923)</p>  |
| 27 Oct. | <p>(a) Guru Gobind Singh left Paonta Sahib for Anandpur Sahib. (27-10-1688)</p> <p>(b) Jathedar Darshan Singh Pheruman died after a hunger strike lasting seventy eight days. (27-10-1969)</p>   |

- 28 Oct. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib left for Anandpur Sahib after spending a night at Kapal Mochan. (28-10-1688)
- 30 Oct. (a) Guru Gobind Singh Sahib left Talwandi Sabo for Nanded. (30-10-1706)
- (b) Chief Khalsa Diwan formed. Bhai Arjan Singh Bagrian elected its first President. (30-10-1902)
- 31 Oct. Bhai Beant Singh and Bhai Satwant Singh killed Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, to avenge attack on Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar and *Akal Takht Sahib*. (31-10-1984)
- 1 Nov. *Punjabi Suba* came into being. (1-11-1966)
- 2 Nov. Birthday of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. (2-11-1780)
- 4 Nov. Maharaja Kharak Singh died of slow poisoning by Dogras. (4-11-1840)
- 5 Nov. Maharaja Naunihal Singh murdered by Dogras. (5-11-1840)
- 7 Nov. British Government seized the keys of the treasury of Sri Darbar Sahib. (7-11-1921)
- 8 Nov. R.E. Egeraton, the Governor of Punjab wrote to Viceroy Lord Rippon advising him not to grant the control of shrines to a body emancipated from Government control. (8-11-1881)
- 9 Nov. Sardar Parkash Singh Badal released the Manifesto of Shiromani Akali Dal. It demanded near autonomy for Punjab (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Currency and Tele-communication with Centre and the rest with Punjab). (9-11-1989)
- 10 Nov. (a) Weekly Punjabi News Paper "*Gurmukhi Akhbar*" launched by Prof. Gurmukh Singh. (10-11-1880)
- (b) Bhim Sen Sachar the Chief Minister of Punjab apologized for Police entry into Sri Darbar Sahib complex on July 4, 1955. (10-11-1955)
- 11 Nov. (a) Martyrdom of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das, Bhai Dyal Das. (11-11-1675)
- (b) Martyrdom of Baba Deep Singh and thousands of Sikhs at Amritsar. (11-11-1757)
- 12 Nov. Cremation of body of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, Bhai Lakhi Shah (Wanzara) at his residence [now Gurdwara Raqab Ganj] at Village Rasaina, New Delhi. (12-11-1675)



In continuation with the last edition:

## **SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR SAHIB JI (1621-1675)**

*-S. Surjit Singh 'Gandhi'*

**We are taking pleasure while publishing these contents from the book  
'History of the Sikh Gurus' by S. Surjit Singh Gandhi former Head of Sikh  
History Research Board (SGPC).**

### **Sad plight of the peasants**

The peasants suffered in another way also. It was the general law in the Mughal Empire that if any robbery occurred within the area of a jagirdari or a faujdar, he was obliged either to trace the culprits and recover the loot or to restore the lost property himself. It offered the officials an excuse to sack any village they chose to suspect resulting in untold misery for its people.<sup>1</sup>

To such circumstances as these, the peasants reacted differently. Some of them left their lands and migrated to fresh areas. Some migrated to the state of some neighbouring zamindars where condition of service was comparatively better-not because they were not exploited by the zamindars but because they were welcomed by the zamindar for his own selfish ends; some, the more daring among them, made Common cause with men of similar persuasions and took to the loot and rapine. The villages and the areas which refused to pay taxes were known as Zortalab. Such villages were often protected by fortresses or forests or hills. In the case of such peasants' risings assuming large proportion, community of faith or caste acted as major rallying forces. This being so, it was but natural on the part of the government to be sensitive to the stirrings of the peasants, and the rallying forces.

### **Role of zamindars**

In this connection, the role of zamindars was significant. These people were different from jagirdars. The jagirdars were appointed by the imperial orders but the zamindars by custom, had emerged as the leaders of villages and had small armies of their own. Moreover, the zamindars unlike jagirdars were often the leaders of caste or tribal groups and as such, they yielded considerable influence. Not unoften, their influence was utilized for the collection

of the revenue, but with the lapse of time and especially during Aurangzeb when the seams appeared in the agrarian structure, the zamindars gained in stature and reputation with the result that the government and jagirdars began to apprehend danger that they might defy their authorities. The zamindars, on their part, were fully aware of the predicament the authorities were faced with as also the psychosis of the men in power. They spared no pains to pose them-selves as the protectors and defenders of the 'peasants against official tyranny. According to Arfan Habib "As the number of stirrings of homeless peasants grew and the peasants took to arms themselves, it became possible for the zamindars to organise them into a still larger bands or armies for dismantling the Mughal Empire and expanding their Chiefships."<sup>2</sup>

### **Government could not tolerate Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji**

The Government committed to the Sunni views of Islam and determined to perpetuate tottering jagirdari-based economic structure even in face of serious contradictions could illbrook Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji who was committed to refashion the society on Sikh principles and whose followers who were largely the peasants and in some cases zamindars, for the reasons adumbrated above, were seething with discontent.

### **Aurangzeb was motivated by religious considerations and not by political imperatives**

Recently authors like Athar Ali have tried to prove that Aurangzeb's religious policy was motivated by certain political imperatives; it did not spring out of his religious convictions. He says "Aurangzeb, having killed his brothers and imprisoned his father, justified the seizure of the throne on the ground that he was more competent than his father. This he tried to prove through military successes but in or about 1666, it was clear that the reckless policy of expansion begun in 1659 had proved to be a complete failure. A new post-facto justification had to be found for his crime of 1658-9". And this justification was provided by an emphasis on the Islamic character of the Empire apart from the desire to resume his prestige on a new basis, other issues were also involved which impelled the Emperor to pursue the discriminatory policy in religious sphere. This policy was pursued to overcome the difficulties. So far as the empire was expanding, the nobility, as a whole, could satisfy its ambition by looking forward. Once, however, it became clear as it did in 1667, that any rapid expansion was not to be expected, the urge for promotions among the mansabdars could not be easily satisfied In such a situation, it must have been rightly tempting for the Emperor to enlarge the avenues of income for them and gratify the nobility by progressively ousting the Hindus including Rajputs from the jagirs.<sup>3</sup>

But our study leads us to conclude that the views of Athar Ali are not convincing. We understand as we have spelled above, that Aurangzeb did act under the influence of the Sunnie's reaction to which he himself subscribed and the chief exponent of which was the Shaikh Sirhindi.

It is not correct to say that after his failure to prove that he was superior to his father, he followed the Sunnie line to justify his stand and resurrect his impaired image. Aurangzeb's stance from the very outset was that of a Sunni Musalman, and most of his actions vis-a-vis the non-Muslims particularly the Hindus were rooted in the conceptual framework of the Sunnies. That he justified the murder of his brothers and the imprisonment of his father through the instrument of Sunnie policies does not prove anything except that he was politically sagacious and shrewd.

A few scholars obsessed with the idea of finding secularism in everything aver that Aurangzeb was extremely selfish and power-hungry and had no qualms for Islam and his policy, therefore, was to promote his own self-interest. He killed Sarmad and a dozen of other Sufis who were certainly Muslims. A careful study of the executions of these Muslims during his reign will show that all such Muslims were either liberal Muslims or the supporters of Dara or both. Sarmad was both a liberal Muslim and a supporter of Dara. Hence the conclusion is inevitable that Aurangzeb's policy towards the non-Muslims was what Sunnie thought warranted.

### **The policy of Aurangzeb clashed with Dharma ideology**

The Guru Ji on the other hand, was against such a policy as it did not confirm to the Dharma ideology of the Sikhs according to which all human activities are legitimate provided they are based on and governed by Dharma. The such action, as do not answer the demands of the test of Dharma are wrong and lead to evil results. Dharma ideology in the context of social and political reconstruction meant social responsibility or imbibing of moral values, social equality transcending narrow or exclusive considerations of creed caste, cline, sex and colour, rejection of hereditary principles as the basis of social order or ethics. The precept of justice formed important fact of Dharma ideology. The precept of justice figured prominently in the thinking of the Guru Sahib. The scientific socialism as it developed 'in the West in the 19th century and as we understand was not known then, but justice as a principle of human relations was well known and was by Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and his successors strongly advocated. As a matter of fact, their close identification with the lower and down-trodden classes and their constant endeavours for their welfare and upliftment were conceived in a desire to plead for social justice. Similarly, the exploitation

of the poor by the rich was held inhuman and unjust. The concept of justice propounded by the Guru Sahib extended to the political sphere as well, where it was regarded as the very basis of government and administration, while the actions of perpetrators of exploitation, injustice and tyranny were exposed and criticised and appeals made to their good sense and reason to mend themselves and the sufferers at their hands were exhorted to conduct themselves with self-respect and fearlessness. The cheap and senseless imitation on their part of their rulers, ways, with no other object than that of placating them, was exposed as an act of passive submission to a tyrant and was dubbed an act of shameful cowardice. Compromise with injustice or tyranny was thus shown as a great evil and fearlessness and heroism a great virtue. In the fight between good and evil, God's support, it was assured, would be always on the side of good, for he is verily the smiter of the evil and the wicked and since time immemorial has been the unfailing protector of the good as against their enemies. "In all jugas He has been creating saints and in all jugas they have been protected by Him. Harnaksh, the tyrant was smashed by Him and Prehlad the victim saved. Moreover, the ethical principle involved in the fights of the famous Hindu heroes like Rama and Krishna was accepted. Each one of them had to fight against evil and each one of them gained victory through the help of God. The Sikh devotees, themselves were presented as 'Mall' or Pehalwanra (wrestler) in the wrestling bouts between good and evil by Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

### **The ideas of the Guru Ji attracted the people of all shades**

The ideas of the Guru Sahib held great attraction for the Hindu trading class who found in them an adequate answer to the Brahmanical exclusiveness and rigidity as well as a catholicity of outlook which could enable it to build up harmonious relations with the Muslim rulers in the interest of their economic benefit. These ideas also presented opportunities to the lower classes like jats to improve their social status. The result was that the Sikh Movement grew rapidly in both number and resources. The growing popularity of the movement alarmed both the Muslim rulers and orthodox Brahmins. The former being of the ruling community, their hostility mattered most. The Mughal Government, prompted by the Muslim orthodox section, began to view the Sikh Movement with deep suspicion.

The martyrdom of the fifth Guru, Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji on one hand, the hostility of the Government towards the Sikhs on the other hand, forged formidable challenge and the Sikhs must try to be able to survive. Sri Guru Hargobind Ji reacted to this situation in the manner of a hero determined to hold aloft the banner of Dharma. His war with the

Mughals was in the true spirit of Dharmyudh, His successor Sri Guru Har Rai Ji was similarly inspired when he led his troops to the bank of river Sutlej in order to block the passage across the river of Aurangzeb's troops marching in hot pursuit of Dara Shikoh. The moral issue was very clear. Dara symbolised the forces of good whereas his adversary Aurangzeb unleashed tyrannical policy of religious intolerance. Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji felt called upon to denounce it and to campaign against it in the true spirit of Dharmyudh tradition coming down to him from his illustrious predecessors. Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji in his famous writing 'Bachittar Natak' has beautifully depicted the Dharma character of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Martyrdom:

"The Lord (Guru Tegh Bahadur) protected their caste mark and sacred thread And performed a mighty deed in the Kali age.

To protect the good he spared no pains,  
Gave his head but uttered not a groan,  
For the protection of righteousness he did his noble deed,  
Gave his head but not his ideal."

Moreover what Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji meant by the word Dharma comes out very clearly from what he said about his own mission in the same work:

For this purpose am I born into the world,  
For Dharma's sake I am sent here by Lord  
Ordained to promote Dharma here and there  
And to demolish the wicked and the evil-minded  
Let all good people understand that I am born for this purpose:  
To promote Dharma, to protect the good, to extirpate the evil.

### **The Guru Ji did not court martyrdom for the Hindus**

In view of this, it is wrong to presume that the Guru Ji courted martyrdom in order to protect Hindu religion alone. The special mention of 'Juga and Tilak' the distinguishing marks of the Hindus has been made only to highlight the point that the Hindus were the main targets of the tyranny of the Government, and in no case the conclusion can be drawn that the Guru Sahib main or soul objective was to protect the Hindu religion.

### **His struggle was against Adharma**

In fact, the Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib struggle was against 'Adharma' the greatest epitome of which was Aurangzeb and the Sunni character of his Government. To achieve his purpose the Guru Ji propagated his mission among the people. During his tour in eastern parts of the country, in the Bangar and in the Malwa region of the Punjab,



the Guru Sahib message brought new awakening among the people who began to rally round the Guru Sahib. The conceptual framework and methods of operations conforming to that were sharply different from the conceptual framework of Aurangzeb. The clash was inherent in the circumstances.

### **New awakening among the people**

### **Exaggerated Reports of the intelligencers**

But how did the matter come to head? Knowing the mind and the official orders of Emperor Aurangzeb, "the imperial intelligencers seem to have been closely watching the movements and proceedings of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji since his return to the Punjab. The Sikh movement, as history knows it, had been looked upon with suspicion and disfavour ever since the accession of Emperor Jahangir to Mughal throne. In A.D. 1665, the Guru Ji was hauled up at Dhamdhan and was allowed to proceed on his tours to the east and north-east only after Raja Ram Singh had given surety for the Guru Sahib conduct. As it is well known that the Emperor's attitude towards the leaders of non-Muslim faiths, especially after 1669, became very hostile, the royal intelligencers and news-reporters were encouraged to interpret the large gatherings and money-offerings at the congregation of the Guru Ji as a dangerous augmentation to the influence and resources like those of Hafiz Adam of Banoor-a religious leader of the Pathans-whom Emperor Shah Jahan had in 1632 banished from India on account of his activities.

### **Views of Ghulam Hussain**

How far misrepresentation could go may be evident from what the author of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin* Ghulam Hussain, has written on the subject "This man (Tegh Bahadur) finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people, became aspiring and he united his concerns with one Hafiz Adam, a Muhammadan faqir, these two men no sooner saw themselves followed by multitudes implicitly addicted to their chief's will, than forsaking every lovest calling, they fell to subsisting by means of coercion and extortion, laying waste the whole province of the Punjab."

### **Notes and References**

1. Dr. Fauja Singh: *Guru Tegh Bahadur-Martyr and Teacher*.
2. Irfan Habib: *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (1963), p. 193.
3. M. Athar Ali : *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, pp. 98, 99.

*Cont...*